DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 199 867 EA 013 368

TITLE	Visitor Control in the Schools. Technical Assistance Bulletin 20.
INSTITUTION	National School Resource Network, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
PUB DATE	[79]
GRANT	79JS-AX-0019
NOTE	4p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National School Resource Network, 5530 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20015 (free).
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Identification; Middle Schools; Program Descriptions; *School Community Relationship; *School Safety; Secondary Education; *Technical Assistance
IDENTIFIERS	*Visitor Control

ABSTRACT

Two methods of controlling visitors and strangers in schools are presented: one utilizes a student visitor reception committee and the other describes various techniques of visual identification of visitors to permit faculty and students to know who does and does not belong in the school. Methods of identification include visitor ribbons and placards. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED199867

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
X Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

National School Resource Network
National Center • 5530 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W. Washington, DC • (301) 654-2550 • Toll Free (800) 638-8090
Eastern Regional Center • 53 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215 • (617) 353-4554
Southern Regional Center • 58 6th Street, N.E. Atlanta, GA 30308 • (404) 872-0296
Midwestern Regional Center • 6 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 1706, Chicago, IL 60602 • (312) 782-5787
Western Regional Center • 18 Professional Center Parkway, San Rafael, CA 94903 • (415) 472-1227

Technical Assistance Bulletin 20

Visitor Control in the Schools

Summary

Two methods of controlling visitors and strangers in schools are presented: one utilizes a student visitor reception committee and the other describes various techniques of visual identification of visitors to permit faculty and students to know who does and does not belong in the school. Methods of identification include visitor ribbons and placards.

The Problem

Most people visiting the school come on legitimate business, and school programs are enhanced by their presence. For example, parents, community leaders, sales people, and service and repair personnel are all important in the school community. However, the presence of other individuals in the school may be detrimental and, in some cases, dangerous. For example, schools have identified problems with strangers who are potential sexual molesters or other highly dangerous criminals as well as ex-students or truants from other schools who come for "fun", extortion, or drug selling.

The problem of visitor control is particularly difficult for any school administration because many of the effective techniques of visitor control are antithetical to the kind of creative climate which can foster community involvement. For example, armed police officers at school doors may keep out unwanted strangers, but they also chill relations with many community residents who may wish to participate in school-community activities. Additionally, often there are not enough staff members to watch the various doors. Situations which involve student accomplices opening fire doors for outsiders wishing access to the school, are particularly difficult.

The Solution

Student Visitor Reception Committee

One very constructive approach to this problem is the use of a student visitor reception committee. A good example of this type of program is in use at the Comstock Middle School in Dallas, Texas. This successful program incorporates many of the elements considered critical to a successful student visitor committee program:

- The visitor reception table at the Comstock Middle School is at the intersection of two long hallways. Students sitting at the visitor reception table can see down the two long hallways to the entrances from two parking lots.
- A student reception committee is seated behind the table, which has a cloth draping (made in the art class) with the school mascot and school colors. Flowers are often on the table.
- Students work in groups of threes. Students are never alone at the visitor reception table. If there is any difficulty, one student can go and get help for the others.

EA 013 368

Prepared under Grant #79JS-AX-0019 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the NSRN and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

- The three students at the visitors' table represent the various ethnic populations of the school. The Mexican-American student selected is bilingual, because many parents visiting Comstock are most comfortable speaking Spanish.

- Students are chosen for this program by the principal on the basis of their ability to greet visitors in a welcoming, courteous manner. Students shake hands with visitors, introduce themselves, and ask how they may help.

- All visitors to the school are given orange and white ribbons (the school colors) to wear saying "Comstock Visitor." Because all visitors wear these ribbons while they are in the school, if someone in the school is not wearing one of these ribbons, all members of the school community know that person is an unauthorized visitor, and the school office can be quickly notified of his or her whereabouts.

- Often a student working at the visitor reception table will greet a new visitor to the school, escort the visitor to the office so he or she can receive a visitor's ribbon and sign in, and then escort the visitor to his or her destination in the school.

- If for any reason, a visitor does not follow instructions, or goes to an unauthorized place, the students at the visitor reception table do not deal with the problem. They are instructed not to confront the individual in any way, verbally or otherwise. Instead they go quickly to the office to report that a visitor in the school is not following proper procedure. The school authorities take over from there.

- The principal wants to know of the presence of every authorized and unauthorized visitor.

- Students serve at the reception table during one period of the day when they do not have class. They receive credit for serving as office assistants during this period. Their work is supervised by the principal, and they meet formally as a group with the principal once a month to discuss issues and answer questions.

- Students may perform clerical chores for the principal's office while working at the visitor's reception table. They may also do homework and talk among themselves. Talking with other students while on duty is discouraged.

- Students are graded by the principal, and their grades, along with credit as office assistant, are entered on their report cards.

Visitor Identification Symbols

One of the most important elements of a visitor control program is the use of some type of identifying symbol so that faculty, security personnel, and student visitor committee members can identify exactly who is an authorized visitor and who is not. Unfortunately, badges and/or security passes suggest paramilitary security and often offend visitors. Other, more effective symbols are--

- Ribbons--The kind of ribbons that are awarded at horse shows or track meets are readily obtainable in almost every community in the country. They can be gold-stamped or imprinted with the name of the school and the word "Visitor." They are very inexpensive and available at most novelty and trophy supply firms.

- Placards--One school in New York uses a fairly large size map of the school printed on bright-colored cardboard which includes a brief description of the school programs and facilities. At the top of the placard is a line for the name of the person to be written in welcoming him or her as a visitor to the school. Because the placard is printed on bright-colored, heavy cardboard, it cannot be easily folded and put in a pocket, and it is readily identifiable. Individuals carrying the placard maps are identified as

authorized visitors in a subtle, unobtrusive way.

- Self-Adhesive Labels--Self-adhesive labels are readily available and can be printed with the school name. Names can be written in or not as the school so chooses. These can be ordered through standard commercial label suppliers and are relatively inexpensive.

In many schools, the labels, ribbons, or placards are ordered in a variety of colors and the color is changed each day. This prevents those who have detrimental intentions from obtaining a placard, ribbon, or self adhesive label and using it on some other day. Some schools write the date and the time that the visitor checked in on the placard or label, although this has the disadvantage of requiring close scrutiny and inspection by the school staff to determine if the visitor is appropriate or not. Color coded symbols which can be seen at a distance and do not require the aura of inspection and surveillance avoid a negative connotation to those community members who come to the school on legitimate business.

The degree of complexity a school wishes to assign to this task of color coding visitor identification ribbons will be determined by such factors as how frequently visitors come to the school, the number of unauthorized visitors attempting to enter the school, and the rate of crime in the neighborhood surrounding the school. A school located in an urban, high-crime area, which is frequently troubled by nonstudents entering the school, might profitably devote a great deal of care to developing a complex visitor identification program. A small suburban or rural school with few visitors might find a simple visitor identification procedure quite satisfactory for meeting the security needs of the school.

Results

Programs involving such activities as a student visitor reception committee and identifying symbols are common in schools throughout the country, but there are no organized studies on this kind of program. Most schools using these programs report a substantial success both in terms of making people feel welcome at their school--a desirable outcome in terms of community relations--and of identifying unauthorized persons in the school. Nearly every school that has had such a student visitor committee program or some kind of identifying symbol for visitors can relate several anecdotes on how potentially dangerous situations were identified and avoided.

Replication Issues

The idea of using identifying symbols like ribbons, can be implemented in any type of school. Student visitor reception committees are most frequent at middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools, and less frequent at the elementary school level, where, for example, in a K-3 school, the students may be too young to be left unsupervised at a visitor table.

Required Resources

A small amount of administrator and staff time is required for the supervision of the committees and the training of the students who work on them. The ribbons, self-adhesive labels, or placards are relatively inexpensive, generally costing only a few cents each.

Contact Person

Dr. Kenneth Bashear, Principal
Comstock Middle School
7044 Hodde
Dallas, Texas 75217

For further information on this program, or to request direct technical assistance in implementing a similar program, contact the National Center or the Regional Center nearest you. NSRN technical assistance is available at no cost to requestors.